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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5281
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHMFIS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHLMC/MCC WASHDC

UNCLAS NIAMEY 000626

DEPT FOR AF/W AND AF/RSA
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ACCRA ALSO FOR USAID/WA
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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Niger: Several Detained Opposition Members Released; Reactions to Extension of State of Alert

Ref: a) Niamey 624 b) Niamey 618 c) Niamey 597
d) Niamey 584 e) Niamey 570 f) Niamey 554

¶1. Summary: Several persons detained in connection with various opposition protests in August (Refs B and C) have been released. The Movement of Nigeriens for Justice (MNJ) reacts to President Tandja's extension of the state of alert in northern Niger (Ref A). End Summary.

Detainees in Niamey.

¶2. On August 27, the Tribunal of Niamey granted provisional release to eleven (11) out of eighteen (18) persons detained during opposition protests on August 22 (Ref B). (Note: One person was arrested subsequent to August 22. End note.) Among those released are former parliamentarian Soumana Sanda, human rights activist Maman Wada, and Mr. Gilles Baille, a former director of Niger's Revenue Service. The Tribunal arraigned seven on charges of "participating in a banned demonstration; and destruction of public property." They are under preventive detention pending trial. No trial date has been set.

On August 20, Alassane Karfi, a PNDS activist arrested on July 18 (Ref F), appeared before the investigating judge at the Tribunal of Niamey, who granted him provisional release. However, the state prosecutor appealed the judge's decision. Karfi remains in prison.

On August 21, rights activist Marou Amadou, arrested on August 10 (Ref D), appeared again before the investigating judge. The judge rejected a request for release on bail filed by his lawyers. He remains in prison.

Detainees in Tahoua.

¶3. On August 27, the Tribunal of Tahoua granted provisional release to thirteen (13) out of fourteen (14) protesters detained on August 22 (Ref B). One person remains in custody and is expected to appear before the judge "soon."

Detainees in Maradi.

¶4. On August 17, the Tribunal of Maradi dismissed the case and released six members of the Coalition of Forces for Democracy and the Republic (CFDR - opposition) who were arrested and detained on charges of "burning tires" on the streets during the August 4 referendum (Ref E).

MNJ Reacts to State of Alert Extention

¶5. On August 27, a Mouvement des Nigeriens pour la Justice (MNJ)

leader, Ghissa Feltou, reacted to the state of alert extension. In a BBC interview in Hausa, Feltou said that Tandja "has no justification to extend the state of alert... because there is no conflict now... Instead, he continues to give full powers to the military who may continue to commit abuses... and the population will continue to suffer." On August 28, another MNJ member, Ahmed Akoli, in an international radio interview stated that the "MNJ's claims are not being addressed... The situation will not improve under these circumstances." He indicated that GON authorities are not taking the peace talks seriously because they have not released all those detained in connection with the uprising in the North. He added, "There were protests and other calls for the release of civil society activists, but you never hear the same for people detained in connection with the conflict in the North... Despite the promise of better economic prospects dictatorship remains a problem."

ALLEN